

Evening Seminar

Engaging Offenders:

Exploring alternative approaches to commissioning
voluntary sector justice services

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Academy for Social Justice
Commissioning

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Academy Overview

- **The Academy's mission** is to bring people together to share knowledge, skills and practice and **to promote excellence in social justice commissioning**
- The Academy was **created in 2007** and now has **close to 4000 cross sector members**
- **Services** are designed to **support the development of social justice commissioning** and include nationwide events, eLearning, commissioning themed learning groups and web pages offering commissioning information



The latest instalment in the saga of the VCS and offender provision...



Commissioning by Consent (CBC)

**IN
PLAIN
SIGHT**

Why not
commission
VCS services
to do *what*
they claim
they *are good*
at doing?

The *trinity* of VCS exceptionalism?

Engagement through
voluntary opt-in services

User **needs** through person
centred **holistic support**

Contributing to **Desistance**

ENGAGEMENT



VCS commitment to engagement

“... can be highly resource intensive and will often produce poor results in the short term but knowing from experience that perseverance can ultimately lead to total transformations in the lives of some individuals.”

(Maguire 2016:58)



More approachable and trustworthy..

Maguire 2012; Mills, Meek and Gojkovic 2012; Neuberger 2009; Lewis et al. 2007; Light 1993

Prisoners could “.....engage with voluntary sector projects and express themselves more authentically, both within and beyond the voluntary sector project places.” (Tomczak and Albertson 2016: 67)

'Who you gonna call?'
**The role of trust and
relationships in
desistance from crime**

“The ‘who’ factor [VCS or statutory agency] was less important than the perception that staff were working outside the boundaries of mainstream offender management..”

(Rowe and Soppit 2016: 399)

“...at the dimming of the day...” (Thompson 1975)



A VCS model of offender engagement



A VCS model of offender engagement?

Elements from the NOMS Engaging Practitioner blueprint (Copsey and Rex 2013)	Qualities identified from the empirical service user data
Structuring sessions	Timing and pacing Gradual approach to resolving problems/providing support
Pro-social modelling	Maintaining a professional and personal relationship Proffering options for the service user to decide Pushing the service user Reframing the service user's thinking
Risk need and responsivity principles	<i>No data available to evidence this</i>
Cognitive behavioural techniques	<i>No data available to evidence this</i>

...and what else?

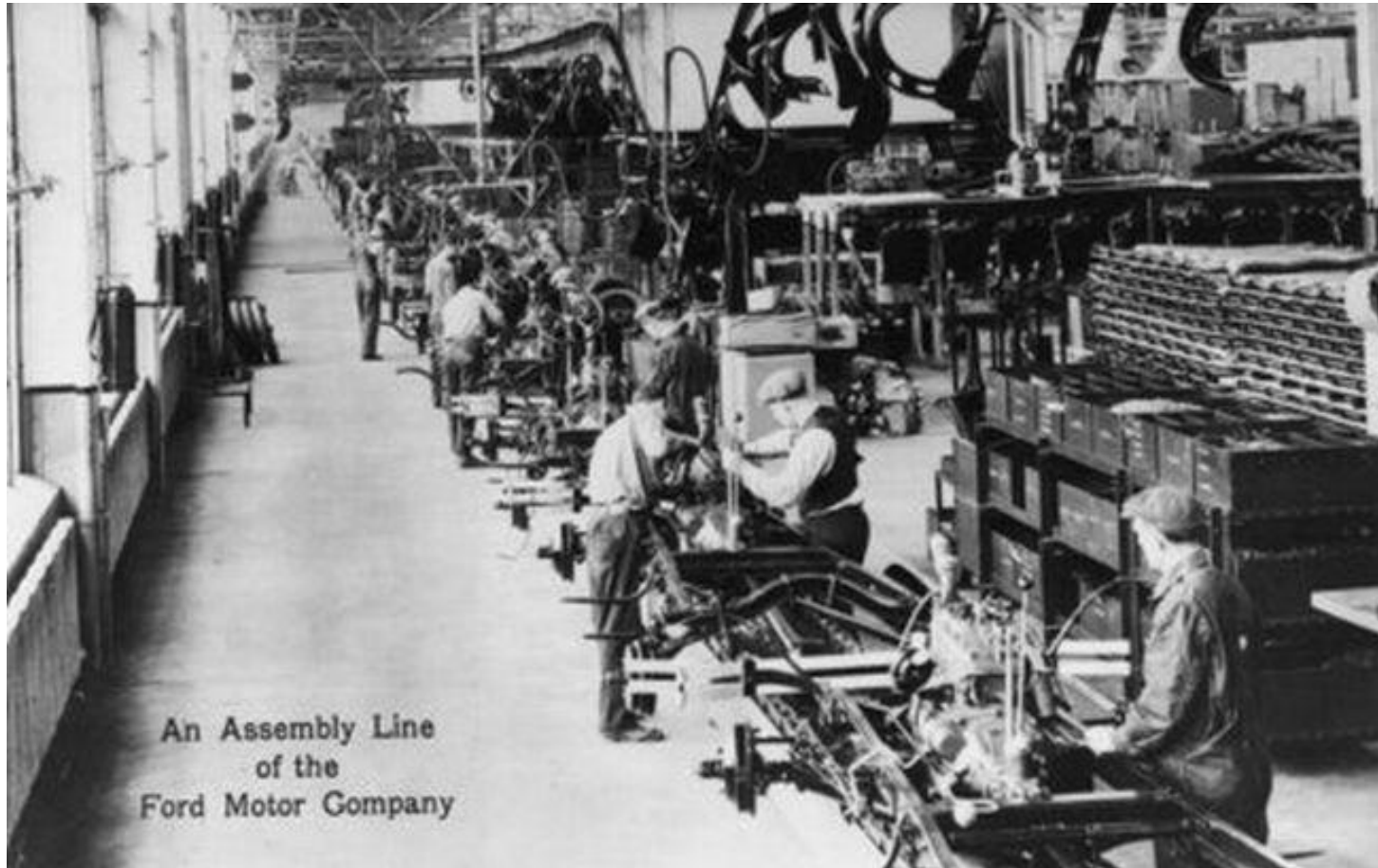
Reciprocation



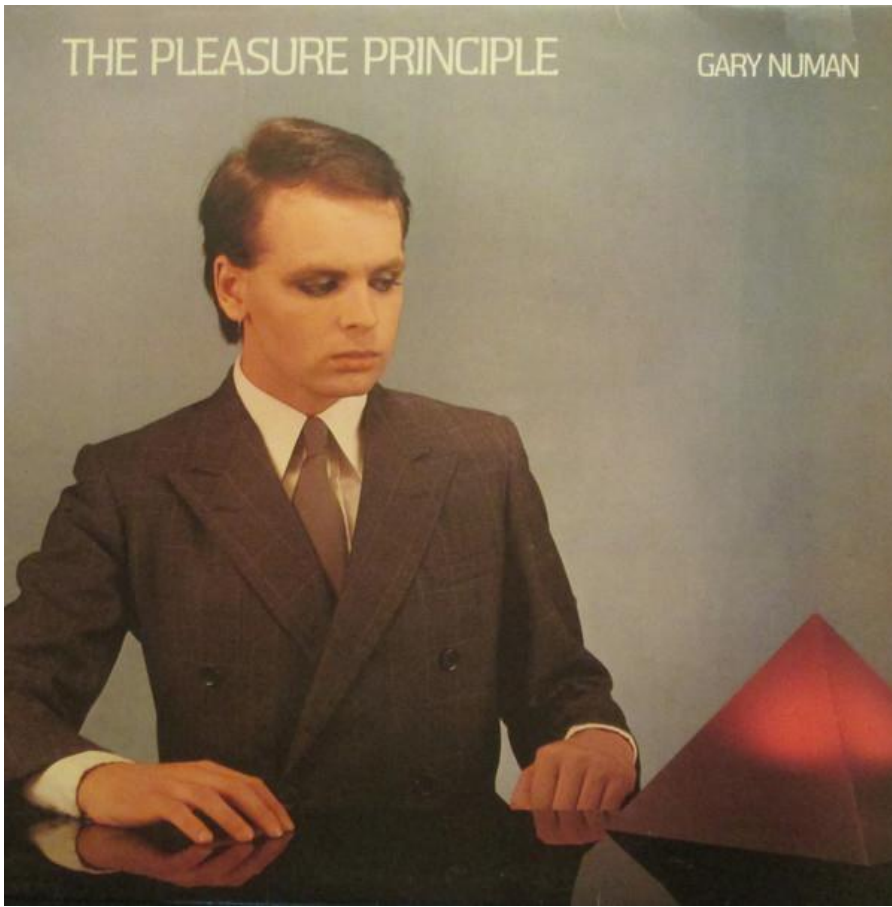
Reliability and consistency



Completeness of provision



Bringing the feelings back



What about criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs?



Risk needs and responsivity

Bonta and Andrews (2007)

Intermediate outcomes and distance travelled

We cannot expect that each VCS provider (many of whom are very small scale and might only be delivering services to 20-50 beneficiaries in total) will be able to run a controlled trial in which outcomes for those receiving the intervention or service are compared with outcomes for those who do not.. (NOMS 2012:3)

Hard, soft... *chewy* outcomes?



Arts, mentoring, family and intimate relationships...



And what about the VCS contribution to desistance?



“...person centred interventions
...with significant points of
synthesis with desistance theory.”

(Martin, Frazer, Cumbo, Hayes and O’
Donoghue, (2016: 32)



*“One of the
‘problems’ with
desistance
research is that it
is not readily
translated into
straightforward
prescriptions for
practice . . .”*

McNeil and Weaver
(2010: 6)

“VCS provision can...

Tomczak 2017, Tomczak and Albertson, 2016, Corcoran 2012, Mills et al 2011, Maguire et al 2010, Brown and Ross 2010, Mills and Codd 2008

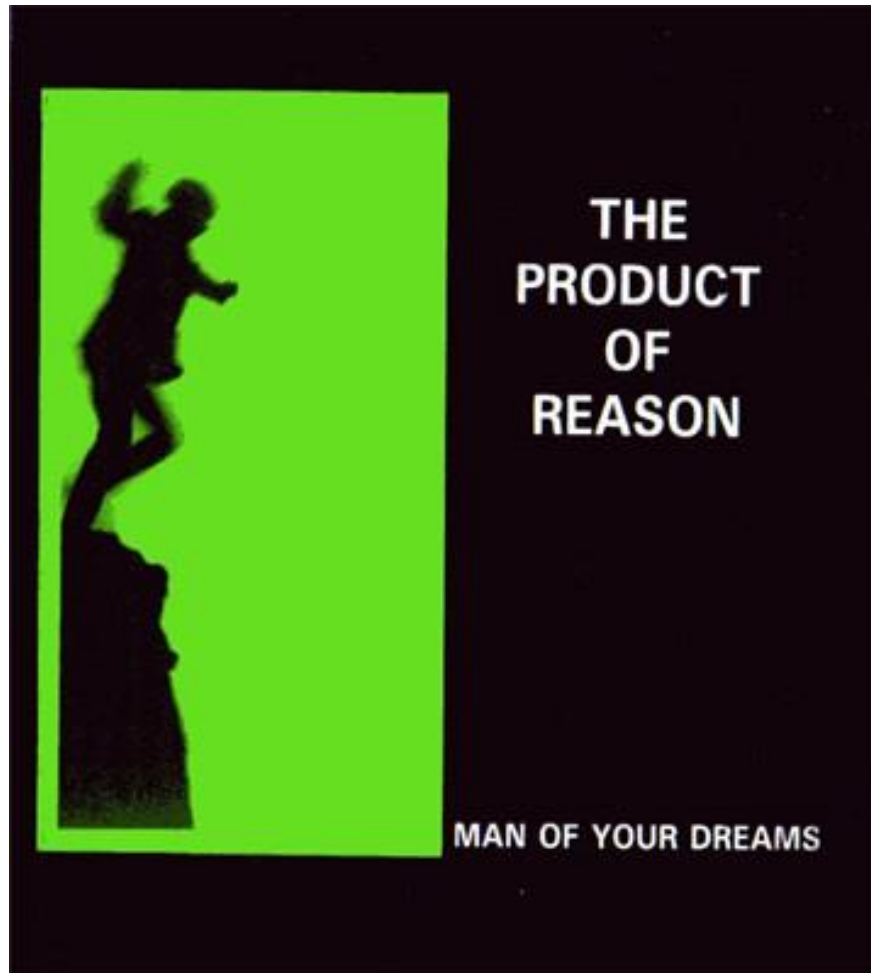


Wyld and Noble 2017

...enhance the social and human capital to enable desistance to occur, supporting offenders in sustaining motivation and offenders’ belief in their own capacity to change.”

Wong et al (working paper in draft)

Commissioning as a leap of faith?



Measurement which...

Better REFLECT what VCS services do

PROPORTIONATE

*Based on what they
ALREADY RECORD as
much as possible*

BUT would require greater consistency in recording and quality of recording

Wong et al (working paper in draft)

Measuring desistance...?

“...quantitative methodologies that allow for ‘survival analyses’ of desistance efforts, rather than relying on outcome evaluations (whether based on randomised control trials or other methods) that rely on blunt measures of reconviction at fixed points in time”.

(McNeil and Weaver, 2010:11)

Using engagement with **voluntary opt-in** VCS services as a proxy measure of desistance...?

The back and forth, non-linearity of desistance

(Maruna 2010:11)

The primary (act), secondary (identity) and tertiary (relational) conceptualisation of desistance should not be taken to suggest a sequential linearity

(McNeill and Weaver 2010, McNeill 2016, Nugent and Schinkel 2016)

A rhizomatic understanding of the desistance journey with the ‘desister as nomad’
(Phillips 2017:92)

How much change is feasible?

Expect
modest
change
and
Beware
of big
numbers



GO ON



Any Questions ?

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<https://mcrmetropolis.uk/blog/you-cant-always-get-what-you-want-or-can-you-engaging-offenders-an-alternative-approach-to-commissioning-voluntary-sector-criminal-justice-services/>



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